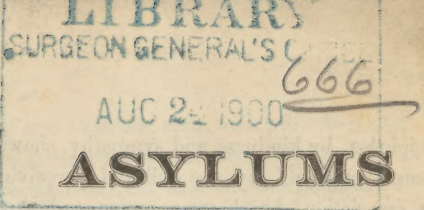


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INEBRIATE ASYLUMS

AS THEY RELATE TO

QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY.

A paper read at the meeting of Superintendents and friends of Inebriate Asylums in New York, November 29, 1870, by DR. ALBERT DAY, Superintendent of the Greenwood Institute, Greenwood, Mass.

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All students of Social Science agree in the declaration that the real wealth of Society and the State, consists in the producing power of the individuals composing it. Therefore it is, and should be, the aim of political economists to eradicate and remove whatever element deteriorates or destroys the productive capacity of the brains and muscles, by whose combined action, the sources of social and national prosperity are developed.

It is in this principle that we find an explanation of the historical fact, that while the various means of intoxication have multiplied in number, and increased, step by step, with the progress of civilization, there have been in all countries, at all epochs of the world's history, advocates of temperance: men denouncing the evil which was producing such pernicious results, who, as the evil became more developed and better understood, by the eloquence of their voice and the influence of their example advocated and enjoined total abstinence as the only effective remedy of an abuse so fearful in its sway, and so destructive in its power, which had increased to such terrible proportions.

As long as temperance was supposed to consist in moderate indulgence only—that men could play with fire and not burn themselves,—the friends of temperance, in its now accepted meaning, that is, total abstinence, could not effect much towards the permanent reformation of victims to intemperance. When, however, it was perceived that total abstinence was the *only* true temperance platform, and by that, and that alone, could the wretched drunkard reform, and acquire and retain a mastery of his appetite, then the efforts of philanthropists were directed with increased energy and hope to extend every facility, and render all practical assistance to those struggling, by total abstinence, to throw off the demon who had held them in subjection during long years of wretchedness.

It was with such a beneficent purpose that, in the summer of 1857, a small number of gentlemen in the city of Boston, comprehending the extent of the evil which, in its ramifications, reached all classes of society, and by its enervating, destroying influence, so injuriously affected the prosperity and happiness of the community; seeming especially to select those, who by their hardiness, their energy and their abilities, were constituted, were it not for the unhappy vice of intemperance, to be active promoters of the general welfare, and often ornaments of, instead of a disgrace to society; and convinced that many such might be reclaimed to social usefulness, to respectability and domestic

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happiness, by kindness and sympathy, showing them that they were not utterly outcast; comprehending I say, the evil and perceiving the remedy, these few gentlemen formed an association, hired some rooms and there laid the foundation of what afterwards resulted in the establishment of several inebriate asylums, under various names, in various parts of our country, the results of nearly all of which have been satisfactory to those who have become familiar with them.

One of the earliest results of the establishment of these Asylums, was the discovery, after the treatment of a very few cases, that inebriety was a *disease* rather than a vice, and this disease began to be pathologically studied, and as its symptoms became better understood, the proper remedies were discovered, and suitable medicines administered, so that at the present time, inebriate asylums have become institutions, where the enervated and diseased physical system of the patient is treated medicinally, and the appropriate remedies are applied to restore his bodily health, while his mental and moral powers are restored by the influence of the superindendent, by intercourse with his fellow patients, and observation of individual cases, and by this influence he is awakened to the danger he has been in, and educated to total abstinence so thoroughly that the instances of relapse are comparatively few.

The experience of several years has demonstrated the success of this treatment.

There have been many hundreds of cases under my own observation and care, of individuals of every age and condition in life, of every conceivable temperament and disposition, and every degree of degradation, down to the very lowest, where the cure has been complete and permanent, and the patients have been restored to and persevere in a life of usefulness and happiness.

Now, setting aside the reflections which a philanthropist would make and the deductions he would draw from these statements, let us consider how they deserve and are entitled to occupy the attention of the economist; which consideration must necessarily be somewhat restricted from the short time we can bestow upon it. And indeed it would not seem that much reasoning was necessary to demonstrate that this branch of reform is eminently worthy the attention of those who would regard it as wholly a matter of dollars and cents to the community. The universally admitted proposition of all writers on political economy is, that the wealth of the State consists in its producing power, and the material on which that power can be exerted. The rapid, unparalled development of our own national resources, i. e. the material, is largely due to the enormous number of emigrants from the old countries—the producing power.

This producing power consists in the brains and muscles which are employed in developing the material resources. Any thing which diminishes this capacity of production, diminishes the wealth.

Now let the political economist go into those parts of our towns and villages frequented by the mechanics, the artisans and laborers, and let him note the numerous instances in which the bent form, the unsteady gait, the trembling hands and gibbering tongue, proclaim the prevalence of intemperance, and say if this producing power is not impaired, if these machines which help fill the public purse are not out of gear, which, if in good working order, would run smoothly and perform the work expected of them.

Let him then visit the resorts of professional and business men, and with observing eye note how frequently the flushed face, the inflamed eye, and too often the thick speech show that here, too, intemperance has established her baneful sway, and say if *this* producing power is not impaired, if the motive power by which the machine is worked, is not diminished if not destroyed. Having noted these things, let him follow up his observations to the consequences of what he has seen, and learn that not only have these muscles and these brains ceased to perform their functions, but that they have become a burden on those which continue at their work, and a drain of the wealth which they produce.

For the consequences to the first of these classes let him look to our town farms, our houses of correction and our prisons, and find their occupants reduced by poverty and crime, traceable directly to intemperance, from a producing power of wealth to a producing power of increased debt and taxation, drawing drafts of no insignificant amount from the treasury which is filled by the frugality and industry of their fellows.

For the consequences to the second class, let him look into the gambling hells, the drinking saloons, and the insane asylums, let him see the baneful effect of the example on young men — let him examine the published lists of failures, and alas! too often of fraud, and see how intemperance has corrupted society, in how many instances it has shaken financial credits, and caused commercial disasters—deranging trade, causing distrust and interfering often to an appreciable, sometimes to an important extent, with the commercial prosperity on which our revenue so much depends.

The direct effects of intemperance are thus sensibly felt in the public treasury by the loss of revenue from diminished production, by the taxation to support its victims, and by the disturbance of commerce and finance. It is an evil in the body politic, which it is the duty of government to endeavor to prevent or remedy. The subject of prevention does not properly come within the province of this address, except to say that the most efficient aid to prevention comes from the establishment of asylums for reformation; for the presence of one reformed inebriate is a constant warning and example more efficient than a multitude of preachers.

It is within our province, and it is the purpose of this address to awaken the attention of the public and of the government to the importance of establishing Inebriate Asylums as a remedy of an evil, working a *material* injury to the State. Keeping in view the proposition established above, that intemperance, in its results, is a loss of revenue production and a burden upon taxation, we advocate the establishment of these asylums as a means which experience has proved to be the best yet discovered for reforming the evil, for reviving the production, and removing the burden on taxation. The practical operation of these institutions, in a few words, is to withdraw the candidate for the workhouse or the prison, from the scenes and associations of his temptation and degradation, to receive him with kindness, and having first expelled the devil within him, to reawaken his manhood and self-respect, and after a season to restore him to the community with a sound mind in a sound body, capable of performing all the functions which his natural powers enable him to, and to become a healthful influence, and an active worker in the great human hive.

This is a statement of the whole problem.

I assert that this is the practical operation of these institutions, from long observation and experience in the management of them. During the last fourteen years I have been connected with them in different parts of the country, and in that time have treated nearly four thousand cases. From this experience I say, and am ready to demonstrate by statistics, that the temperance asylums, properly conducted, are an actual saving to the State, in dollars and cents; that from their establishment, the balance in the treasury at the end of the year, is greater than it would be without them. Of the four thousand cases which have been under my care, the instances of relapse have been less than is generally supposed. The patients have come to me worthless or worse than worthless, as citizens; they have left me to become active, useful additions to the trades, occupations and professions from which they had come; *producers*, producing *taxable* results.

The limits of this address will not permit me to go into details, and for obvious reasons it would not be proper to cite individual cases, but I can refer to many striking confirmations of the above statement, in several cities and towns. They have come to me prostrated and degraded—they are now accumulating property for themselves, assisting others to do the same, and contributing largely to the support of the State Treasury.

A short time since I made an estimate of the taxes which I could ascertain were now paid by patients who had come to me, incapable of work and a source of expense to their friends and the public, and found the amount sufficient to build and support several inebriate asylums. Startling as this statement may seem, it is within the actual facts. The number of patients was not large, and the estimate of the expenses of establishing and conducting the institutions was accurate.

We ask that the knowledge of this important fact, that the establishment of these asylums is an economical measure, should be so diffused that every reflecting man in the community should know it. We invite first the investigation of legislators, and then the co-operation and practical aid of the Government, so that the benefits of this reform may reach thousands where it now reaches hundreds. It is a measure worthy the attention and reflection of our best and wisest men, one by which an economy is effected and reform promoted by the same act; taxes lessened, revenue increased, society benefited and homes made happy.

Philanthropy! Economy! what other project so combines these two? What other principles so worthy to be the foundation of legislative action?

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## GREENWOOD INSTITUTE

FOR THE

Treatment of Inebriety, and other forms of Nervous Diseases.

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